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Subject: Saved by Hope.

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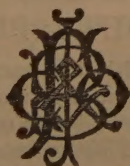
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PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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SAVED BY HOPE.

"For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do, I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me, (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man; but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin."—ROM. vii. 9—25.

The question arises, whether Paul was speaking of his own experience, or whether he was giving the type of a universal experience through which all men have to pass. Unquestionably he was giving his own experience in part; and just as unquestionably it is an experience which is in its full extent impossible to the great majority of men. The facts which underlie this experience are common to all—namely, the facts of universal imperfection, and universal aspiration, accompanied with a sense of disappointment and painfulness; though only in natures of a high moral grade does this experience work out any such positive form, and come to such results as are here delineated in such remarkably strong language. It reveals the utter disappointment and the wretched discontentment of men who are endeavoring to live aright, and yet who, the more they examine themselves, are better satisfied of their moral imperfections.

After this sad descant, that closing verse of the chapter sounds very strangely. The apostle goes on in that mournful vein, saying substantially this: "I have two men in me; I have an animal man, and a spiritual man; and the spirit man is trying to emerge out of the animal condition, out of the body, out of the flesh, and go up on a higher plane; and the flesh is all the time too strong for it, and pulling it back, and throwing it down." So, at last, in this long conflict, I have come to that state in which I set one off against the other, and say, "My real self, my upper self, admires God's law and all that is noble, which it develops, and aspires toward it, and longs for it; but that under self, which sprang from the ground, and which is tending backward all the time, is pulling down this upper self, and bruising it, and maiming it, and hurting it in every way. I am always seeing what I ought to be, and am always trying to be that; but yet I do not hit the mark. I am always in a state of aspiring with one part of my nature, and of being degraded by the rest.

It is like the struggle of a man on a march, chained to a dead body, who has to carry himself and drag the body too, and says, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Or, it might be said, "Who shall deliver me from this death, which comes to me by reason of my body?"

And right in the midst of that most profound expression of moral sadness, that self-measuring experience, which results in his stamping his life with condemnation at every step, sounds out, like one single trumpet-note of victory: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." He does not say what he thanks him for; he does not say how he stands related to it; but just before he cried, "Oh wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" and now he exclaims, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

In one of the East Indian campaigns, during the great insurrection, when the English army were shut up in a city, besieged, almost at the point of death from starvation, and decimated by the constant assaults of the adversary, a Scotch lassie, who belonged to a Highland regiment, all at once thought she heard the sound of bagpipes afar off; and the soldiers laughed her to scorn. But after a little time others heard it. And then there came in note after note. By-and-by the sounds of the instruments of a full military band were recognized. And soon, from out of the forest, came the relief army, that broke up the siege and gave them deliverance. And with flying colors, and glorious music, they came marching up to the now released city.

Such is the difference between the last verse of the seventh chapter, and the last verse of the eighth chapter, of Romans. For here, in the seventh, is that first, far-off note of victory. After that descant of his own wretchedness, and poverty, and moral imbecility, comes the exclamation: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Then, in the eighth chapter, he breaks into a discussion of the spirit-life and the redemption of the flesh, and there are snatches, again and again, of that victorious note, growing stronger and fuller, till he comes clear down to the end, when he breaks out: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Jesus Christ our Lord." And there comes in the army. There are the banners. There is the full band.

I do not know whether I shall be able to succeed in giving you this line of thought, as it developed itself then, and in the more modern form, as it naturally develops itself among us to-day; for there are two translations which have to be given of many parts of the Word of God. We have to translate passages from one language into another; and then we have to translate much of the truth of God's Word into the modern style of thought.

This doctrine was oriental. It was a doctrine delivered according to oriental modes of thinking, which have changed. After eighteen hundred or two thousand years of growth, our method of taking hold of things, our mode of looking at them, is so different that there is the necessity of translation from one method or mode to another, as well as from one language into another.

When one is born into this world, he is born into a school of laws. Unless you have thought of it, it will surprise you to see how, at every single step, and on every single side, men touch law. It will surprise you to see how many spheres there are opened to them. Just as soon as the child is born, and begins to develop in consciousness and in the rudimentary forms of choice, he has to begin to learn physical law. First, he learns it as respects himself. He learns it as it relates to the eye, the ear, the hand, the body. He learns his relation to external physical law by fire, by water, by cutting edges, by stairs down which he falls, by all manner of ma-

terial elements. And he generally gets knowledge by little tentative ways; by endeavors that are more or less punitive. The first step into life is a step of learning physical laws. Of course the child cannot comprehend the scheme of law which belongs to the whole universe. He takes in only that part of it which touches his own being. This knowledge does not flash upon the child instantly, but comes to him gradually. He will touch the fire, and will be burned, and will cry; and he will touch it again; and it is not until the repetition has suggested the connection which there is between the glowing coal and the sense of pain, that he learns not to touch it. And even then he does not think of law, or anything of that kind. The condition of possessing knowledge in this world is that one shall first learn physical laws—one, two, three, many scores of them; and that it shall be a gradual unfolding; and that much of it shall be the result of mistakes, or of ignorances, and the punitive consequences which follow them.

Just as quick as the child gets old enough to be at all intelligent, he finds that he enters upon thought, and expansion therein; but he is not set free. He is kept upon the same process of acquiring knowledge of law. There is continued the same necessity of his knowing physical law; but he comes also into the relation of affection to his parents, and brothers and sisters, and others, members of his household. He learns that there are other than mere physical laws of which he must have a knowledge. He learns that his life is developing into a broader sphere. He learns that he is under the dominion of laws which govern the living of one with another. He begins to learn the domestic and social elements of law.

He no sooner goes out of the household than he finds that there is a society law, to which he is amenable, and that there are two forms of this law. One form is that which is expressed by public sentiment, manners and customs. It involves the question of what it is right to do on certain occasions. It inquires, for instance, how one shall go into the presence of others; how he shall go out from their presence; what is respectful and kindly; what is courteous. There are a thousand elements of unwritten law which relate to intercourse outside of the household, between the old and the young; between the eminent and the inferior. And one has to learn these. Until he has learned them, he is not accounted as well-bred. He learns them gradually, a little at first, and then a little more, and so on from beginning to end. And he is breaking and breaking these unwritten laws continually, in order that he may learn. He is always seeing which is the right way, and not walking in it. He knows what perfection is, but he is conscious of being imperfect.

And when, still further, he goes into the school, he learns there the same thing. The schoolmaster is only an applier and interpreter of laws, unfolding him through the process of knowledge.

If he learns a trade, he has to go through the same process. And if he goes into a profession, it does not relieve him from this test. There is no sphere in which he is relieved from it, all the way up to what is called his majority—from the beginning until he becomes a man, and enters upon an active life. And then the sphere opens yet further to him—not only the mundane sphere, but, if he be well taught, a higher one, in which he has a conception of a commonwealth of faculties in himself—what we call character, or manhood—something that he has to attain to, by using the appliances which God in his providence has given him. This conception of character, together with the attempt to obey all this complexity of intersphering laws, has the result of leading him to measure himself; and directly he will have the experience of aspiration, and the consciousness of coming short, of imperfection, of sinning, of failing.

Now, it was not an accident, I think, that the world was made as it was. I am one of those who believe that God did what he meant to do when he made this world so that everybody should come into it a pulp, knowing nothing, and attaining to everything he has by gradual unfolding. I believe he intended it. I believe that was the divine idea. You do not need to go to anything but to life to find it out. There is God's revelation. He meant that the race should be created in such a way as that it should come to knowledge by these consecutive steps into higher spheres, all the way through learning law along the line of right development, and gradually attaining to obedience. So that the whole race has, in each generation, begun at the very lowest point—at zero—working up the scale by these tentative processes. There is a voice of God in actual human life teaching us that these are the facts. I shall not undertake to confute the theologies which have had their schemes on this matter. I shall simply state what every child now may know: that this is the divine method, and is the one which is interpreted by the actual occurrences of life.

If there be anything that we can learn from nature, it is that men, being born into this world, unfold gradually through an increasing knowledge of laws, and learn to obey those laws, little by little, because that was the way in which God thought it best they should be evolved and developed.

When, therefore, we say that all men are sinful, we speak in the line of the world's experience. When we say that men are sinful in every faculty, and that there is not a single faculty in the

human soul which does not come to its knowledge by the steps of learning, we speak in accordance with the facts of life. If you look along the line of any faculty to the law which belongs to it, you will find that there has never been an intelligent being in the world who kept that law, or could keep it, or was expected to keep it. There has never been a human being created who, if you should take one of his faculties and lay its law alongside of it, would not be found to have broken it inevitably—to have broken it by the organic necessity of his creation. It could not be otherwise. Can a man see before he learns to see? Can a man walk before he learns to walk? Are men to blame because the moment they are born they do not run? Is a man to blame for acting according to the necessity of the creative idea—universal imperfection?

In this sense, every part of a man, body and soul, begins at the bottom, where it has to learn everything, and has to learn it by mistakes as well as by knowledges, in accordance with the fact of universal imperfection; and if you call the violation of law *Sin*, then there is universal sinfulness. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain until now." The whole world has been growing through the stages of this necessity—by this attempting to learn law, and running against it, and receiving its back-thwack.

It is the world's universal sentiment, looking at it in its secular aspect, not only that there is no man who has obeyed, but that there is no man who can obey perfectly. Ignorance itself is enough; but then consider the surrounding influences in society which meet generations. Before the child knows anything; before it can control by intelligence its conditions, he is met by good persons or by bad persons, as the case may be. The best of persons are imperfect. There is no father, there is no mother, that does not impress some influences upon the child that are wrong—that is, that lead him to violate the great abstract laws of his being. Myriads of children are born under influences that are concentrated upon them, and that are wrong all the time, and that bend them and bias them.

Consider what forces act upon men from national life, from the avocations in which men engage, from all the influences which come upon men from the natural world, which they have no voice in producing, and which they do not understand how to meet. Consider what must be the life of an Esquimaux, buried for so many months of the year underground, and living in his squalid hut. Compare his life with the life of a Greek, in his beautiful climate, and with all the delightful scenery with which he is surrounded. Consider how differently they are situated. Consider what influences are brought to bear upon the little beginner in life when he starts. Consider how

many of these influences are prejudicial; how many are limited; how many are imperfect; how many are adverse. And next consider what would be the result of a clear view of an ideal manhood, harmoniously developed within, and perfectly obedient to law without. If you should bring such an ideal as that rigorously to bear upon any household or school or nation; if you should hold up the full, final aspect of a civilized and well developed man as the law of personal conduct, and bring it clearly and sharply to every man's consciousness, there would not be a man on the face of the globe who would not feel, "I am dead, if that is life." As long as men have no conception of a true manhood; as long as this is not brought home to them, they can say, with Paul, "I was alive when I did not know the law. As long as I had not a measure by which I saw what was manhood, I was unconcerned, though I was devoid of it, and deficient in every one of its elements. And when the measure came I saw how lacking I was." Yet, such is the condition of universal being that men do sin, and must sin. That is to say, by the very nature of their being they are imperfect. And this being the fact, there is infixed in every part of man's nature a provision for his imperfection.

The mother—what is she, carrying her babe in her arms and thinking for it, and feeling for it, and shielding it, but a divine providence which recognizes its helplessness, and administers to its wants with a care without which it would perish on the very threshold of its ignorance and weakness. For a child is organized in imbecility. But its future is before it. There is nothing of it but the possibility of the future.

When the child leaps from the mother's arms into the household, is it held to a rigorous account for all its little ignorances, for all its unskillfulness, and for all its mistakes? Just so much discipline is employed as is necessary to secure the child's own good, and harmony in the little community round about it; but no more. Allowance is made for the child's want of development. It must creep before it can walk; and this fact is moral as well as physical. Every household is a little community based on two facts—first, the imperfection of its members; and secondly, the taking them in their imperfection, and treating them, not as culprits, not as in a damnatory condition, but as in a condition of imperfection which is a creative fact, necessary and unavoidable. There could not be a household system that should undertake to measure the conduct of children by the line and plummet of justice. There has never a child lived that knew how to carry its body so that it should not every day break laws; and if you were

rigorous with the child's disobedience, you would exterminate him, so that there would not be skin enough left on him to whip. There is not a child born that does not violate the law of the eye, and the law of the hand, and every law of the body, in his intercourse with his brothers and sisters and companions. There is not a child that lives who is not led by his temper to interfere with the comfort and happiness of those with whom he associates. When children come to be five, six, seven, eight years old, they leave a trail of imperfections along the path where they walk; and if you were to apply to their conduct rigorously the law of right and wrong, and they were to be punished in everything according to the measure of their violation of rectitude, there would not be a child to punish, in ten minutes. It would annihilate their existence. And therefore the principle of tolerating violation of law is inherent in the very nature of the existence of the household.

When you go out of the household and come into the school, is not the condition on which the teacher assumes the direction of the scholars this: that he shall give himself to bearing with dullards, and roguish boys, and mischievous girls? And is he not obliged to tolerate evils every single day? Is not the government of the school built up on the foundation of tolerating wrong—not because it is wrong; not on account of any love for that which is wrong; but because wrong is inherent in the conditions on which human life is based? Human nature is imperfect in the beginning; it continues to be imperfect; and you are obliged, if you are going to make anything of it, to bear with it.

And when you go out of schools into trades, what would you think of a master-workman who should pitch a boy out of the door or window, because, as soon as he had received his first hint, he did not know how to use the tools, and work up the materials to the best advantage? What the apprentice went into the shop for was to make mistakes, and to learn by making them. It is by making mistakes in learning a trade that he comes to understand the nature and use of the natural laws which lie in those departments in which he is engaged. And learning implies that there is somebody who will teach, and will wait, without impatience, until instruction has had time to produce its proper results.

If you go further than that—into society—you will find that all its departments are obliged to adapt themselves to these two great facts: first, that there is universal imperfection, or sinfulness—if you choose to call it by that name; and, secondly, that there is no getting on except by a kindly, nourishing, benevolent toleration of this imperfection, until persons have had time to grow out of it.

If you could at once open the whole conception of character, the complete ideal of manhood, upon the reflective, imaginative, conscientious nature that stands at twenty-five or thirty years of age, and therefore has knowledge enough to take in the full conception of what is expected of him in body, in soul, in mind, in affection; if you could show him this whole realm of law in its intricacy, touching him at every pore, pressing upon every part of himself, night and day, in the family, in the shop, in the street, as a citizen, and more especially as an heir-expectant of immortality, and as the builder inwardly of that structure which we call human character—if that vision is opened on a man who is full of conscience, and he feels, “I am bound to obey in every single one of these respects, but from the beginning of my life to the end of it I am sinful and disobedient”—under such circumstances there is not a man that would live. There is not a man who, with such a weight upon his conscience, will not be ground to powder. There is not a man who can bear up under such a burden and survive. Paul said: “When the law came, sin revived, and I died.” The moment he measured himself by the law, the moment he had a conception of what he ought to be, and felt that he was responsible for being what the law required, he said: “I am a dead man; I am wrong all through; I am sinful, and always have been, and always shall be, for I cannot deliver myself from sin.”

Now, then, this principle of toleration for imperfection, this principle of sympathetic helpfulness which runs through society, is to me the first twilight dawn of the Gospel conception of the divine government and of the divine nature. All men are sinners, and sin is only another word for universal human action. So it is; so it has been; so it will be. The whole creation staggers. The world is made up of men who do not know how to do, or are not expert in doing, what they ought to do. Men are full of infirmities, and out of infirmities come all manner of sins.

But when we see that by the providence of God there is developed in the hearts of men—in every relation, and more and more as they fill out the divine ideal of manhood—patience, forbearance, and helpfulness for others, not accounting to men their mistakes, in order that by help they may learn more perfectly not to make mistakes; and when we see that just so much suffering is allowed to go on with mistakes as shall keep one’s memory alert, and help one’s vigilance—and no more—nothing for temper and vengeance—only such an amount of pain being inflicted as is necessary to the welfare of the person who is being trained and disciplined—then we begin to have some conception that these things are so

because we are a part of the whole moral government of God, and because they are in accordance with the divine idea on which the government of God is founded.

It is right here, I think, that Christ reveals God's true moral government; and I think it is just this that the apostle meant, when, after going through his wonderful analysis of the struggle of an enlightened conscience, with its conditions and circumstances, he cried out in despair, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" and then instantly—"I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." There is something in Jesus Christ, and that which he taught, that meets the universal condition of facts which the apostle outlines in his own experience, and which I have attempted to show belong to our experience, just as much as it belonged to his.

I understand that the redemption which comes by Jesus Christ assumes the universal sinfulness of the race. I understand it to assume that men, being born into life, sin as the sparks fly upward. Much of that sinfulness (I still call it by that generic term) they are blameworthy for; but, more of it they are not blameworthy for. A child is not blameworthy because he does not know arithmetic when he is two years old. A child is not blameworthy because he cannot read *Paradise Lost* when he is four years old. A child is not blameworthy because he is not familiar with *Story, on the Constitution and Laws*, at eight years old. A child is not blameworthy because he does not know how to make a machine when he is ten years old. He will suffer from not knowing things that he has not learned. It is a deprivation. It is a misfortune. And if a man does not understand the laws of his being, it may not be his fault, but it will be a damage to him. It may not be a man's fault that he has not money, but it will be an inconvenience to him to be poor. Many and many a man, in the wilderness, does not know that the berries which he eats for his hunger are bad, though they are harmful to him.

A part of our sin, then, may be called the infirmity or the necessity of the condition in which God has put us—of the state in which we work out our salvation in this world. And sinning, according to the popular acceptation, has blameworthiness in it. That which a man knows to be wrong, and can avoid, but does not avoid, is blameworthy and guilty. But all that mass of error and aberration and law-breaking which lies beneath this—the bulk of human experience—is not blameworthy nor guilty. Yet, being violation of law, it inflicts pain. Law is like a quickset hedge on the sides of a road. If you run against the hedge, even though you do it ignor-

antly or accidentally, it pricks you, and sends you back to the middle of the road again. We are all the time running against laws, and suffering from the pain which they inflict upon us.

Now, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ reveals no other doctrine than that which human experience everywhere justifies—the doctrine of universal sinfulness and universal helplessness. There is not a man that lives who does not sin; and of all sinners there is not one who does not need that enlightening which comes from his instruction and his training in the household, and in society. Who does not need that teaching which nature gives? and who does not need that illumination which can be given only by the Holy Spirit of God? Every man needs it. For with all the helps that we can get, life is an up-hill work. Unfolding is a very slow and imperfect process. Living in this world is a profound mystery; and such are its conditions.

But that thought which shot like an arrow through the apostle's mind, and which has shot through the mind of many and many a man since, is that of the benevolence of God. As in society there is tolerance toward sin and imperfection; as there is a disposition of compassion for sinners; as there is a relative attainment which patronizes those who have not attained; as there is a strength gained by experience which ministers to those who are weak for want of experience; as there is a pity which looks leniently upon mistakes; as there is a father-heart, mother-heart, loving heart all through life where men are in connection with each other; so lift up that same quality and enshrine it in the Infinite God, and put it into the infinite government of God; and teach men that as God made them to sin and be sinners, so there is an adaptation over against it of moral government, which is compassion, and patience, and long-suffering that waits to be gracious, and that the nature of God is not vengeful and punitive in any such sense as that which we attach to this term; but that it is the nature of God, having made such a world, to carry it according to the conditions on which he made it.

The revelation of the fatherhood of God by the Lord Jesus Christ is the redemption of men by hope; and it is this that gives to Christianity what the Law had not, and for the want of which it did not do the work for which it was sent. You can never administer any government over this world which shall neglect the universal fact that men are sinful; and you can never administer any government that shall treat men according to absolute sin, measured by any ideal law. You cannot control the universe on any principle which does not adapt itself to a state of things in

which sin is universal and continuous, and which does not undertake, as the physician does in a hospital, to nourish men, and to be patient with them, not accounting their sins to them.

In the first place, in view of this, the attitude of God in respect to the whole human family is not one of burning anger. It is not one of stern, magisterial watching and waiting to be just. It is not a nervous feeling of the hand for the scepter to strike down the wrong-doer. Where wrong mounts up to portentous heights, it demands some instantaneous and effectual check. Where the child in the household breaks out into a violent anger, and is destroying the happiness of others with his bomb-like temper, the bringing the little sinner to a sense of his wrong-doing is right. The pain and shame are means to an end—and if the end were served oftener, I think it would be better for many children. However that may be, the feeling of the parent is one of patient love; of patient waiting; of desiring to teach the child how to obey laws which he was born ignorant of.

In the whole divine sphere, in the bosom of God, there is simple paternity. He has not spread abroad the myriads of creation, and left them in their helpless condition, that he might punish them for coming short of obedience to his decrees. In other words, he does not measure men by an ideal standard of noble manhood, and damn forever those who cannot come up to that standard. There is not a living creature that can come up to it; there never was one, and there never will be one, as long as the world stands and laws remain as they are now. There is no getting along except by administering law in such a way that it shall fit itself to the facts of the creation of the world, as God made them to exist, and as they were made known through the revelation of God by Jesus Christ.

And that is atonement. What is atonement? * That Christ gave God the right to be compassionate? That he came down to this world, and made a bargain, and agreed that he would suffer so much if God afterwards would exercise compassion and leniency toward men? Away with your shop logic! Away with your commercial theories! Go down among the moles and bats, and grope with such detestable notions of truth as that by agreement Christ came among men to suffer and give God a chance to be gracious! Over all these heresies of hell I lift up the glorious words, “God so loved the world that *he gave* his Son.” Love before Christ loved, was the bow which sent that silver arrow into the world. “God so loved”—when? From eternity. Whom? The world. And what was the mission of Christ? To develop it; to disclose it

So to live among the unloving and imperfect as to show what perfect manhood was; so to live that the lowest, and wretchedest, and weakest should be drawn to him, and feel his caress; so to live that when armed hate thrust its spear into his side, as it had driven the nails into his flesh, he should die loving. By these majestic symbols alone does the world know how to learn anything of Christ; by these symbols do we have interpreted to us that love of God which is manifested toward the universe, and which endures to the uttermost. Since death is the uttermost of our human experience, it was used as the symbol of the uttermost in the Infinite; and it is the revelation of that stupendous and glorious divinity of love which sits in the heavens and utters its decrees right and left, above and beneath, everywhere, filling the universe, first or last, with the fruit of divine benevolence.

When, therefore, Paul came to understand his experience, and see how impossible it was for him to live as he wanted to, he said: "There is the law, and I cannot walk according to it. There is the road, and I cannot keep in it. Here is the thing that I want to be, and I always come short of it. Who shall help me?" And then he looks up, and says: "Glory! God is a Being who does not demand full obedience as a condition of his loving me. He takes me in my weakness, in my sinfulness, in my aberrations, in both that which comes from infirmity and that which is guilty."

The nature of God as made known to me by Jesus Christ is such that, as a mother gathers up her little children in her arms, and both rebukes them and heals them by love, so he gathers the poor, the wretched, the incompetent, and the bad, and carries them in the arms of his love. Love is the atoning power, and God is atonement. It is out of his own loving nature that he forgives; and it is out of this same loving nature that he punishes. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth," applies to the whole administration of God in the world, through time and eternity.

We may understand how, when that vision rose upon the apostle, he could say:

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?"

And then, rising higher, he said:

"I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Is this love universal? Is the sun universal? Does it shine

for you or for me any more than it does for any other man? Whose sun is it? His that takes it. To whom is it a bounty? To him that accepts it. Is it universal? It is universal to all who want it. There be many who lose it. There be many who will not take it—who hide till night comes on, and then prowl about and miss what benefit there is in it. The loving helpfulness of God and the power of God are universal; and the word of the Lord is, "Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

O men, measure yourselves no longer, saying, "I have no hope because I find myself so imperfect." There never lived a man on the earth who was not imperfect. Do not think that your joy in salvation is to depend upon evidence that you are so regenerated, that you are quite perfect, or pretty near it. There never was a saint that walked in heaven that did not go in there as a sinner saved by grace. It is a gift of mercy and love. There never was a perfect human being. There never was a creature that came in at one side of life and went out at the other, that he did not come in and go out imperfect, and ministered to all through by the patience of God's love. We were not saved by the dying of the Lord, but by God's loving patience. Death was the symbolic measure of his love.

Who, then, is not in such a condition to-day that he can accept the love of God in Christ Jesus? Let not bad habits keep you back. Our God will help you to break up your habits. Let not your doubts hinder you. There is no one who does not doubt. There is a central loving Power—go toward that. Let not your aberrations, mistakes, and trials withhold you. The more imperfect you are, the more you need the medicine of the soul, and that is loving God and your fellow-men.

I preach to you a God that loves *sinner*s, and that administers a government of love for the sake of healing sin. I preach to you a God who loves men that are weak, and infirm, and in every way imperfect, and is buoying them up night and day, and inspiring them, and watching over them by a providence that carries them forward and lifts them higher and higher, and will continue to lift them till they shall be ransomed in the Lord. Oh, love toward that bright center! Let hope fly thitherward. Do not deny your inward want. Do not let your condemnation of yourself cease; but let not conscience become your despot. Look away from that by faith to the sanctuary, and to the love of the blessed Father. Hope and strive; *hope and strive*; and however far you have gone,

when the time for dismissal comes, look not to see how good you are, nor how perfect you are, but to see how bountiful God is. Never measure yourself. Measure that Bosom, measure that Heart, measure that Love.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

WE draw near to thee, as they that wake from sleep draw near to the morning at the rising of the sun. O thou, Lord of light, and life, and love, we behold thy light streaming abroad. It is the coming of it that wakes us; and while we seem to solicit thy mercies, thy mercies are the reason why we are drawing near to thee. We try to find thee, and are found of thee. Long before we lift up our thoughts, behold, the impulse of thy Spirit is working mightily in us to lift them. Not from the sea comes the vapor up of its own self: it is drawn by the sun; and hiding itself in the depths above, by-and-by it comes to the earth again, to make all things blessed. Neither do our joys, nor our sorrows, nor our affections rise towards thee self-moved, or by the impulse of our will. Thou, with an ever-clear and shining face, art drawing us upward to thee. We seek thee sometimes in prayer; but a thousand times beside, we seek thee in ways whose names we know not. We have cravings that reach out for some unseen and unknown God; and these are of thee. From thine inspiration come our aimless yearnings. Our petitions thou dost inspire in us. Thou dost cause those groanings which are not to be expressed—that are unutterable. Our discontent with ourselves; our discontent with the world; our discontent with our own pride; our discontent with our feebleness, and the small sphere in which we are working; our discontent with our want of harmony with the things which are round about us—these are inspired of thee. Thou dost grant unto us those visions of a better life and of a better state which put to shame the humbleness of our present condition. Thou art continually unveiling heaven to us—not in its fullness, but only so that we may see its brightness, and know that thither is our life steering. Thou, O God, dost work in us for our good. Thou dost find us as the sun finds the soil; and thy Spirit doth penetrate the soul as the sun's warmth penetrates the earth; and thou dost bring from us that which blossoms and that which becomes fruit. Thou art, O God, the Sun of Righteousness; and in us are developed the fruits of the Spirit. We rejoice in thy presence and in thy power. We rejoice that thou art such an One as that we cannot understand thee. Not that we love obscurity; but we rejoice that God is greater than the compass of our thoughts, and that thy nature is larger than ours—so much larger that we cannot gird it about even by the imagination. We rejoice that we draw near to thee, and sail across the bosom of our God not as mariners sail along the edges of the sea which they dare not venture upon. Who shall know the greatness of thy power? Who shall hear the thunder thereof? Who shall comprehend thy nature? Who, by searching, can find thee out unto perfection? We live toward thee. That by-and-by we shall rise unsphered here, and insphered there, to know thee—this is the hope and

expectation and longing of our life. We are called sons of God; and it is a blessed thought that by-and-by we shall know what that means. Now we are impelled, in all the ways of life, by forces which largely depend upon this mortal state and the clods on which we tread. What it is to be set free from the body; what it is to live when flesh and blood shall be no more a part of us; what it is to behold thy face when there shall no longer be eyes to behold with, nor forms for the eye; what the spirit of life is; what are all its ecstasies; what its further development is to be; what are to be its ennobling occupations—these things we know not; but we believe that there is to be conscious life. We believe that there are to be blossoming joys, purer and greater than any that we know in this lower state. We believe that we are growing up under thy tuition and in thy presence. We believe that we are being developed, and are to become glorious, far beyond any knowledge that we can have in this life.

And so we are saved by hope. And what, in all the round world, is there that could keep us amidst a creation that groans and travails in pain, were it not for the hope of that redemption which awaits the earth? For the creature was made subject to vanity, not by reason of his own will, but by reason of Him that created, that He might redeem. And we believe, O Lord our God, that there is a better life. The new heaven and the new earth shall yet, by-and-by, satisfy us, who are bewildered with mysteries in life; who walk at noon-day as if it were twilight, and at twilight as if it were midnight. We would not measure the grandeur of thy promises and the riches of thy fulfillment by that knowledge which we have of things here below; for we grope and are afar off from thee. And we rejoice to believe that thou wilt move upon the broad lines of thine own thought, and not upon the narrow lines of ours. We rejoice to believe that thou wilt create a new heaven and a new earth, in which shall dwell righteousness more gloriously than it hath entered into the heart of man to conceive.

So we are saved again by hope. We cast our hope forward beyond darkness, beyond tears, beyond suffering, beyond disappointments, beyond all mortal conflict. There, where thou dwellest, in the great unknown, unfathomable life, is our hope. And may it bring us back tidings of joy. Though we may not understand what heavenly joy is, yet give us a certainty of its blessedness in overmeasure, forever and ever.

And now, unto thee, O Lord Jesus, be honor and glory, for that love which is disclosed to us by these secrets of the future. We thank thee that thou hast tempered the law of the realm in which we dwell to our thought, and taken from it its hardness and its despotism. Blessed be thy name that thou hast revealed to us that thy heart is not of stone, and that thine ear is not deaf to the helpless and the poor, and that thou dost tenderly treasure up the sorrows, and sufferings, and troubles of men, and cause them to be as so many winds that, unknown to them, waft them on their voyage. Accept our thanks that those very things which seem to threaten destruction bring salvation.

We rejoice in all that which thou hast made manifest, and in all that which shall come when we shall read life better, and when nature shall teach us more perfectly the things which now we but dimly understand. We rejoice in thee, O thou blessed Saviour of the world. Even the thought that there is a Redeemer at the right hand of God, who ever liveth to make intercession for the toiling millions of the globe, is itself an ecstasy; and we glorify thee for the knowledge of it, and for the faith which we have of thee. We believe that no prayer comes to thee in vain, and that no sorrowing heart is unseen by thee. We commend to thee, therefore, those who are consciously sinful and erring; those who are sad and sorrowful; those who stumble, and are not strong enough to lift themselves up again; those

upon whom night has come, and to whom it seems as though there were neither star nor promise of the morning. Those that are overthrown, and those that are trodden under foot of men, we commend to thy merciful Spirit.

O Lord our God, we pray that thou wilt draw near to those who are in thy presence. Some come like the children of the morning, and are bedewed with thanksgiving and with joy. Accept their praises and their thankfulness. Draw near to those who are fulfilling vows which they made in sickness and in trouble. Draw near to those who have not for a long time been in the house of God, to whom come a thousand memories this morning, and whose hearts are drawn by tender chords running every whither. Draw near to all those who come this morning with children in their arms and with companions. What is there on earth that so pleaseth thee as our yearnings toward others, for their up-building, and ennobling, and salvation? We pray that thou wilt inspire thy people more and more to that life of faith and prayer which thou dost so love. Draw near, we pray thee, to all those who come to replenish their strength. Give them food. Give them drink. From the river which cometh out of thy throne, and from which cometh all power, and wisdom, and goodness, quench their thirst. Draw near to those who are seeking, through many clouds and doubts, to know the way of truth. O Lord, we beseech of thee that thou wilt reveal thyself to them in the simplicity of thy love and goodness. May they trust thee more than their thoughts of thy realm and of thy glory.

Grant that every heart in thy presence may be able to form to itself a thought of God full of majesty, and truth, and purity, and use all his life in loving and drawing up toward himself those who are far away and imperfect. May all thy people trust goodness. May they trust wisdom. May they trust the power that controls from the center of things, whence comes all that is beautiful; whence comes all harmony; whence comes all symmetry. The comfort of home; all things which make life desirable and which men seek—are not these ours? And do they not come from thy heart and nature? Art not thou more glorious than any glory? Art not thou more beautiful than any beauty? Art not thou more lovely than any loveliness, and more loving than all love? Grant that we may lift our hearts from these scattered sparks which reveal thee here and there, to that great glowing, glorious center which is itself the source and fulfillment of all that is good and all that is noble in life. Let all doubters, we pray thee, cast anchor, at last, in the harbor of hope. Let them not be storm-tossed any more. Reveal to them something that they can fasten faith and hope upon. May they, at last, have a hope which enters, like an anchor, within the veil, sure and steadfast.

We pray that thy blessing may rest upon all the efforts of thy people, in their families and in their neighborhoods. Remember our Sabbath-schools and all who teach in them; and may thy blessing, which has followed them so many years, still abide with them. Be with their officers and teachers, and fill their hearts with divine and sacred compassion for those who are with them. We pray that thou wilt bless all that relieve the poor, enlighten the ignorant, right those that are wrong, and bring back the weak and the unwary who have strayed from the path of rectitude and all the mercies and humanities of life. Let more and more be filled with the divine Spirit and the divine power. Let truth and knowledge go forth in all our land, and let superstition and ignorance everywhere die out.

Pity the nations that are outspread on the earth, so many of whom are in degradation and darkness; and let that light which is so sweet to our eyes break in upon theirs. Fulfill thy promises; bring in both Jew and

Gentile; let the world at last be filled of thy glory, and the whole earth receive thy salvation.

And to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, shall be praises evermore. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Our Father, we pray that thou wilt bless the word spoken, to the encouragement of any that are desponding; to the reviving of any that are sick; to the illumination of any that are in darkness. We pray that thou wilt not take away from us the consciousness of sin, but deliver us from the crushing sense of transgression. We desire to be inspired by the love of Christ, and to live more perfect lives. We desire to walk in the light of instruction and of knowledge toward all excellence. We desire to dwell in the faith that thou art continually loving us, and helping us to do that which is in accordance with thy will. We pray that thou wilt bless the word to all who are in thy presence; and may it more and more bring forth fruit in every heart. We ask it for Christ's sake. *Amen.*

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